

Olympic Sculpture Park

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

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Funded primarily by private donors, the Olympic Sculpture Park gracefully pairs the work of renowned sculpture artists with an urban park setting, in the process restoring public access to the city's waterfront.

A small group of forward-thinking individuals are responsible for the ambitious decision to site a sculpture park in downtown Seattle. Spurred by their sizable sculpture collections, Seattle Art Museum (SAM) board members Jon Shirley and Virginia Wright met with museum director Mimi Gardner Gates in 1996 to raise the possibility of creating a sculpture park. That same year over a campfire in Mongolia, Gates and Martha Wyckoff, Trust for Public Land (TPL) board member, talked about their desire for more Seattle parks and the lack of space for outdoor sculptures.

With the help of then-TPL staffer Chris Rogers, Gates, Wyckoff, Shirley and Wright began scouting for land and in late 1998 they made an offer on a mostly cleaned up industrial brownfield in Belltown with gorgeous views of the Puget Sound and Olympic Mountains. With funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, the museum hosted an international design competition with entries from 52 firms. Five finalists presented their work in a public forum in May 2001 and the Olympic Sculpture Park Design Panel selected Weiss-Manfredi Architects' innovative design in June. The Design Panel included museum leaders and trustees, art collectors and design professionals. In 2002, the selected design was unveiled to the public, with mixed reactions.

Most of the park's funding came from 6,500 private donors, including SAM board members, Belltown residents and environmentalists. The state and federal government contributed to remediation of site and local jurisdictions helped assemble land for the park; these grants were made to the Museum Development Authority.

In 2007, the Olympic Sculpture Park opened. Previously home to a UNOCAL oil transfer facility, the site now boasts 21 works of public art, a restored shoreline with salmon habitat and a beach, three Northwest-inspired gardens, and a pavilion with exhibition space, an amphitheater, museum shop, two cafes, and office space. The park's programming is intended to be flexible and evolve over time, and will include loans and temporary installations in addition to permanent sculptures.



Clockwise from left: Olympic Sculpture Park (Shannon Wagner). The newly constructed beach offers the only direct access to the water in downtown (Seattle Art Museum). "Typewriter Eraser, Scale X" by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, loaned to the SAM by Paul Allen for three years (Seattle Post-Intelligencer/Paul Joseph Brown).

BASIC FACTS

Size:	8.5 acres
Location:	Belltown, adjacent to Myrtle Edwards Park on Elliot Bay, divided by active railroad tracks and Elliott Avenue
Cost:	\$65M capital expenditures (initial estimated cost: \$60M)
Financing:	City: \$6M (including \$2.1M from Pro Parks Levy) County: \$1.7M State: \$8.1M Federal: nearly \$5M (including \$50,000 from National Endowment for the Arts to conduct design competition) Private donors: \$64M + donated and loaned sculptures (including \$20M maintenance endowment from the Shirleys)
Co-owners:	Seattle Art Museum, Museum Development Authority
Manager:	Seattle Art Museum
Features:	21 works of public art, restored shoreline and aquatic habitat, reinforced seawall, tidal garden, beach, open meadows, sheltered valley, forested glade, 50-car parking structure; pavilion with exhibition space, amphitheater, museum shop, classroom, cafés and offices
Activities	Permanent and temporary art installations, indoor and outdoor cafés, public and private events



Key Findings

General:

Like the central waterfront, the Olympic Sculpture Park is in downtown Seattle. However, its site is mostly under private ownership and was originally a brownfield requiring extensive remediation.

Governance:

The relationship between SAM, the Museum Development Authority and the City of Seattle was challenging at times, but ensured that public and private perspectives were represented throughout the project.

Finances:

Collaboration between a nonprofit (SAM) and public entity (Museum Development Authority) enabled the project to receive tax-deductible donations, foundation grants and public funding available only to governmental agencies.

Fundraising for the Olympic Sculpture Park was combined with the campaign for SAM's downtown expansion. Features within in the park were named in recognition of private donors after the fundraising was complete, rather than tied to each donation.

Design Process:

The public had a limited role in the design process. Following an international design competition, SAM's design panel invited the design finalists to Seattle for an interview. This included a lecture and presentation of their work open to the public. The final selection of a design firm, however, was made internally by a design panel composed of museum leadership and trustees, as well as art collectors and design professionals.

The City of Seattle's participation in the development of an initial concept plan with the SAM and Weiss/Manfredi was seen as a crucial element in the project's success.

Private Donors

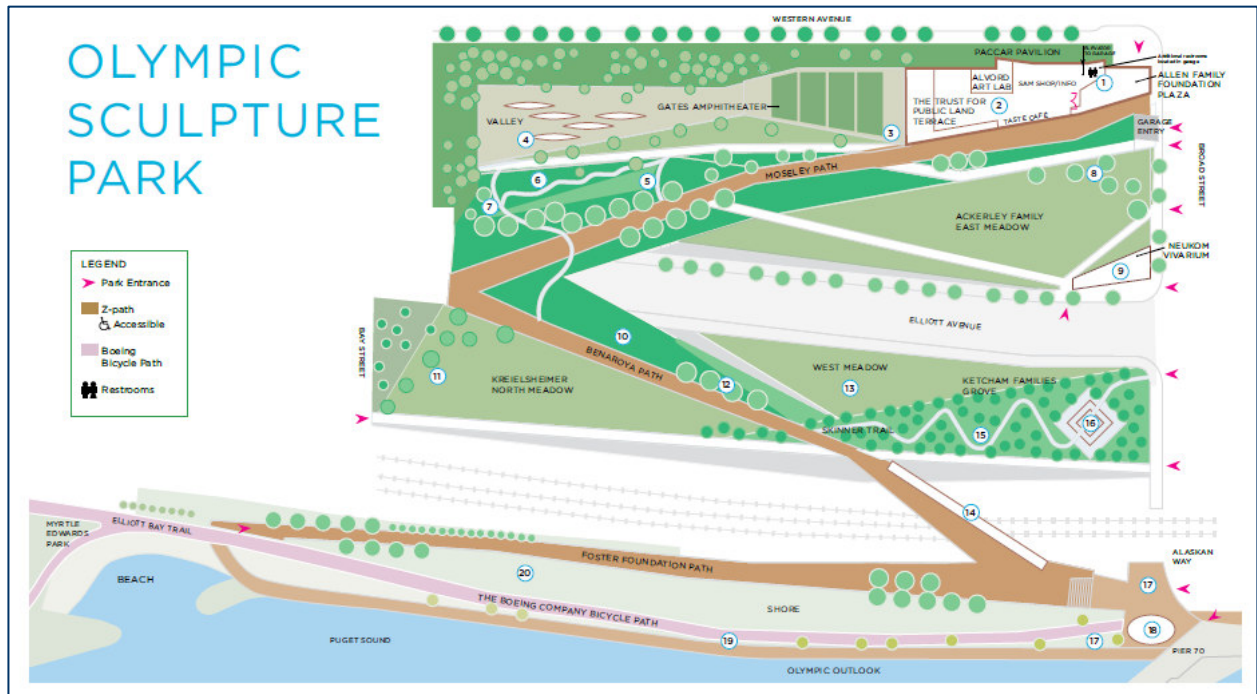
\$25,000,000+	<i>Jon & Mary Shirley Foundation, The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation</i>
\$10,000,000+	<i>Jeffrey & Susan Brotman, Charles Simonyi Fund for Arts & Sciences, The Bagley & Virginia Wright Family Fund</i>
\$5,000,000+	<i>Robert M. Arnold, Ann P. Wyckoff</i>
\$4,000,000	<i>Paul G. Allen Family Foundation</i>
\$2,500,000+	<i>Thomas W. & Ann M. Barwick, Barney A. Ebsworth, The Kresge Foundation, Sally & William Neukom, Norcliffe Foundation, Sam & Gladys Rubinstein</i>
\$1,000,000+	<i>Barry & Ginger Ackerley, Ellworth & Nancy Alvord, Becky & Jack Benaroya, The Boeing Company, The Foster Foundation, Friends of the Trust for Public Land, Elizabeth P. & Edward T. Gardner, Richard & Elizabeth Hedreen, The Henry & William Ketcham Families, Janet W. Ketcham, Kreielsheimer Foundation, The Robert Lehman Foundation, Microsoft, Susan & Furman Moseley, PACCAR Inc, Herman & Faye Sarkowsky, Seattle Art Museum Volunteer Association, Estate of Stu Smailes, Atsuhiko & Ina Goodwin Tateuchi, Washington Mutual Bank</i>
\$50-\$500,000	<i>6,500 individual donors</i>

TIMELINE

1910	• Union Oil of California (UNOCAL) begins using site for shipping and transferring gasoline and diesel fuels.
1975	• UNOCAL shuts down the shipping/transfer terminal.
1981	• UNOCAL begins trying to sell site; pollution problems found.
1985	• Museum Development Authority is chartered by the City of Seattle to help develop SAM's facilities.
1988	• UNOCAL begins working with state to remove 117,000 tons of contaminated soil and 15,000 liters of petroleum—the "biggest 'biological' cleanup of hazardous waste ever undertaken in the state" at a cost of over \$6.5M.
1995	• Jon and Mary Shirley wanted the Seattle Commons to include a sculpture park.
1996	• Voters reject the Commons for the second and final time. • The Wrights and Shirleys met with Mimi Gardner Gates to raise the possibility of SAM creating a sculpture park. • Mimi Gardner Gates and Martha Wyckoff discuss joining forces to create a sculpture park during a fly-fishing trip in Mongolia. • Seattle Art Museum decides to build a downtown sculpture park.
1997	• Chris Rogers becomes park point man for the Trust for Public Land. • Rogers, Gates, Wyckoff, the Shirleys and the Wrights begin looking for the right property.
1998	• SAM's bid on the UNOCAL parcel is accepted, with six months to come up with \$1M towards their purchase of the site.
1999	• Seattle Art Museum buys UNOCAL parcel (with help from its chairman Jon Shirley, former president of Microsoft, and TPL) for \$17M as future site of the Olympic Sculpture Park. • Seattle's Sellen Construction is hired to build the park.
2001	• Nisqually earthquake damages seawall along park's future edge. • SAM leases parking lot in front of Myrtle Edwards Park and tidelands from Seattle Parks Department to add to the sculpture park site. • 52 firms participate in international design competition; Weiss/Manfredi Architecture/Landscape/Urbanism selected for project. • SAM resolves conflict regarding location of viaduct tunnel replacement with WSDOT.
2002	• Park's design unveiled.
2005	• Construction begins.
2006	• Strike by concrete workers delays the park's completion. • Richard Serra's "Wake" is the first sculpture placed in the park.
2007	• Olympic Sculpture Park opens.



The Gates Amphitheater at the Olympic Sculpture Park (Grant Mandarin).



Top, left to right: PACCAR Pavilion and Gates Amphitheater at night; during the day (Seattle Art Museum). Bottom, clockwise from left: aerial view of Olympic Sculpture Park (Seattle Art Museum). Alexander Calder's "Eagle" (Seattle Art Museum). "Split" by Roxy Paine (Seattle Times/Alan Berner). "Love & Loss" by Roy McMakin (Stroupe Group). "Wake" by Richard Serra (Seattle Post-Intelligencer/Paul Joseph).